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REMINISCENCES OF AN ART-STUDENT.

Every student of the School of Design must have a lively recollection of the Bryan Gallery, and the somewhat doubtful representatives of the "old masters," therein enshrined. Daisy and I were much given to spending an hour or so of the afternoon among those invaluable relics, though I cannot say that we were inspired thereby with any very devout respect for those dead and buried hierarchs. Here and there, we found some stray gem, lost in a wilderness of what—with any modern names attached—would be called infinite trash. There was every variety of holy personage, in every style of torture and beatification, and melancholy distortion; crucifixions and Descents from the Cross, which greatly disturbed my young imagination; Holy Families, and crowned heads; Popes, and cardinals, and cavaliers. Nor was mythology without its representatives, among these time-blackened canvases; there were several Naiads in white satin, with powdered wigs and strings of pearl, and Venuses with elaborately dressed heads, and ornamental necklaces and bracelets. And there was one lovely Diana—not that it looked at all like one, but the catalogue called it so—a pliant brunette in amber satin, playing with a King Charles spaniel; and this is actually the only "old master" which I can remember with any degree of satisfaction.

But there was one picture, I believe by a modern German artist, before which Daisy and I stood for many a long minute. It was a tiny gem, which, in a canvas hardly six by nine inches, discovered such a world of the weird and grotesque horror in which we revelled, that we never wearied of gazing and enjoying. An old German crone, stolid and wicked, stooped over a great battered tome of demonology, and a young girl, who held it with her, glanced aside with frightened eyes at the mad revel of witch and fiend and grotesque demon that crowded the low-ceiled smoky room. Skeleton monsters, with lustreless, hollow eyes, trailed their shrouds among fish-headed devils, and half-human toads, and weird pipers, playing like the fiend in "St. Anthony," who

"had both nose and mouth in one,
And squeezed his nasal melodies out,
With many an octave shake and run."

Over a bubbling cauldron in the background hung a grey hag, who flung in her charms, like one of Macbeth's witches; and up the wide chimney, the vanishing tail of a cat appeared, with a broomstick, *en route* for the Brocken. The wild fancies and extravagant images were so infinite, and the expression of the whole so perfect, that one could have overlooked any mechanical failure; but there was not even a careless touch, or a discord in the grave rich tones of the coloring, to offend the eye. It is an unpardonable heresy, I know, but I still prefer my recollection of this picture to those of the undoubted Raffaelles and Titians that hung beside it.

But there was one greater charm, that held me longest before the oldest and most fantastic pictures in this strange collection. I had always a passion for old relics, things that had no other attraction than their years; and old pictures had

a nearer interest for me than any other fragments of antiquity. It was an intense delight to me to lose myself in the strange fancies that crowded these old canvases; tracing through the hard incongruous lines and faded color, all the workings of the hand and brain that had wrought there so long ago. There was a fascination in studying their expression, and dreaming over their quaint ideas; wondering how this color had been blended, and that shadow mixed; how the old artist had worked up the fine labored lines, and spent his very soul in giving soul to the face, in faint flecks of shade, and lights that had seemed to quiver with life as he gazed and gazed.

I cared most for the old portraits, which grew into personalities as I studied them day after day. Not for their beauty, or any excellence that they possessed, but in their human interest—in their shadowy reminiscences of mortality that had been nowhere under heaven for centuries past. I tried to find the workings of the soul in those still faces, and catch the secret of the life that had been; to read the mystery of the steadfast eyes that had gazed out on so many years, and the sealed lips that could never utter their history. More than one of those quaint old portraits I could copy from my memory, line for line; they come back to me like living faces, that I have always known, and never shall forget.

A different spell was that which haunted the upper room at Goupil's, where Daisy and I went almost daily. Among the charms of the little French cabinet pictures that we always delighted in—those exquisite ladies (it always seemed to me that only French artists could paint *ladies*) with the clear, delicate, gem-like brilliancy of color, and the infinite fineness of finish—we found one supreme attraction. Across the end of the room hung Gérôme's "Morte du Cesar," a copy of one-half the original canvas, and in which only the principal figure was given. I cannot forget the awful fascination that it had for me; the grandeur of that single prostrate form, with the mysterious half-veiled face, and the helpless outstretched hand. Hour by hour we stood before it, ignorant of any words to explain its charm, or our own intense pleasure in it—caring for no criticism, or technical praises, such as our fellow-students could have bestowed—only awed and hushed before the regality of Death; the conqueror conquered, and grander in that defeat, than in any victory with which Life had crowned him.

There too we found another shrine at which to worship—for there hung Verner's portrait of Gottschalk, and Daisy and I, following the general example, used to post ourselves before it with the most faithful devotion. How well I recollect it!—the pale clear face that struck me like a revelation, with its exquisite delicacy and spirituality; the wonderful charm of the eyes, that I used to fancy were like violets, though it was not in likeness of color that the idea lay. It disenchanted me with all my old heroes—the dark-eyed Ravenswoods and stormy Rochester—and the dreamy blue eyes convinced me that only in delicate features and palest fairness, lay the subtle and perfect charm. I had never seen the lord of the piano in those days, and when I did, I discovered innumerable and awful failures in

Mons. Verner's conception of his face; but still I liked the picture, and I remember just the lazy hauteur in the turn of the head, and the expression of the clasped hands.

But I have forgotten Daisy—the demure little girl who used to study Gottschalk's eyes beside me. An absurd little pair of captives we were for the great Chevalier! I never can look at Daisy now, with her graceful figure, and the soft delicate colors that she always wears, without laughing at the Daisy of our school-days; who wore such a brilliant scarlet dress, and a scarf that I have never been able to persuade myself was *not* a strip of ingrain carpeting.

If I had space, I could write indefinitely of those most halcyon days—that year which Daisy's mamma calls a "wasted one," but which seems, as I remember it, the brightest one in all my childhood. I suppose that we *might* have learned more, and done more; but we never could have enjoyed it better, and as people say there is not much happiness in the world, it seems to me that Daisy and I should only be glad that we found so much of it, in those wide dusty galleries and bare alcoves. I could write of so much more, so many things, and places, and people that we used to delight in, that it seems to me I have only told the least. When Daisy reads this in Paris, great will be her disgust, and many times will she execute in imagination, that awful threat which she most affects, of "taking me by the ear," because I have left unmentioned so much that we always enjoy and laugh over—because I have omitted to speak of so many, victims of our youthful satire, embalmed in memory by such titles as the "Elephant," and the "Ancient." But unfortunately the ART JOURNAL, and Mr. Watson's patience—not to speak of that of his readers—have limits; and, being only an Art-student, I could not venture to monopolize the room that "Paletta" might improve with so many more learned and edifying commentaries. So Daisy (I had almost written Peg, which is a more strikingly original form of Marguerite, though she will most unreasonably object to it) must even be content with what she finds here set forth, and with the many memories which we never could write down.

And so our year came to end. Peg—the Atlantic being between us, I will venture to repeat that undignified pet name—went to Europe, and I was left desolate. There was a great agony, I remember; an interchange of locks of hair (mine being about two inches long, and not at all satisfactory); much mourning and lamenting over two flower-pots into which I had transplanted a violet and a crocus from the garden at Cottage Place, and which I knocked off my window-sill, to inevitable ruin, some weeks after, when indulging in a deliciously dismal hour of star-gazing; a bewailing poem, in some newspaper or other, my first launch into print;—and then I filled up the void. Daisy came back from Paris, so unreasonably tall that she looked over my head—and far beyond the era of short scarlet dresses and ingrain scarfs. We presently decided that we were not exactly each other's ideals, but we still indulged in a comfortable friendship, and have not altogether given up our youthful follies. We have occasional fits of reminiscence, and in one of these, Daisy proposed that I should write this record, and I have fulfilled her commands, if not altogether her expectations.

MINETTE.